

THE RESCUE

A Tale of Gloucester Life

WE had been running to the eastward down the Cape Shore way, and the "Johnnie Duncan" was in Canso harbor, with a bad easterly outside and the skipper wondering what he would do.

By JAMES B. CONNOLLY

"I'd like mighty well to head her to the westward, for I don't believe there's going to be much more fish seined this fall. And wouldn't she make a passage of it—from here to Gloucester—what? Not a whole lot short of five hundred miles—and wouldn't she just hop along? Everything dragging and keep her right side up, she'd certainly make great leaps to the westward—and I'm sure we'd all like mighty well to be getting home. But Lord! it's risking vessel and crew—or making hard work for all hands if nothing else, just because a few of us are nervous. It ain't good sense, is it?"

While the skipper sat there in the cabin, smoking and meditating, letting us into his thoughts every now and then, the voices of some of the crew were heard on deck.

We all went up and got the word that was being passed around. A coast steamer had just come to anchor in the harbor with the report that just outside—about ten miles to the westward—was a vessel dismasted and clean-swept, and dragging toward the rocks. They could not help her themselves—too rough—a hurricane outside. To launch a boat was out of the question. They didn't mind taking a chance, they said, but to attempt her rescue would be simple suicide.

It looked like a pretty hard chance going out in that gale, but our skipper didn't wait—not Tommy Clancy. "Nobody else seems to be hurrying to get out, and we being the ablest looking craft in the harbor, I calculate it's up to us to go." He got the exact location of the distressed vessel from the coaster, and then it was up anchor, make sail, and out we went.

There were people who called Clancy a fool for ordering out his vessel and risking his crew that day—men in that very harbor—and maybe he was. But for myself, I want that kind of a fool for my skipper. The man that will take a chance for a stranger will take a bigger chance for his own by and by.

We saw her while we were yet miles away, down to the westward, near Whitehead, and with the cruel stretch of rocks under her lee quarter. Even with plenty of sea-room she could not have lasted long, and here with these ledges to catch her she seemed to have a slight chance. We had a good chance to get a look at her as we bore down. Everything was gone from her deck, even the house and rail. There was not as much loose wood as would make a toothpick. We learned afterward that two seas had hove her down so that they had to cut the spars away to right her, and then just as she was coming up another monster had caught her and swept her clean—not only swept her clean, but stove in her planks, and started some of her beams so that she began to leak in a fashion that four men to the pump could just manage to keep up with.

We could just see them—the men at the pumps working desperately, with the others lashed to the stumps of the masts and the stanchions which were left when the rail went. Her big hawser had parted, and her chain was only serving to slightly check her way toward the rocks.

With spars and deck-gear gone and her hull deep in the water, a vessel is not easily distinguished. But there was something familiar in this one. We had seen her before. All at once it flashed on half a dozen of us. "The Flamingo!" we shouted. "Gods, that's luck!" said the skipper; "the best friend I've got on earth—Maurice Blake—is on her."

She lay in a sort of inlet that was wide open to the gale, rocks on the biggest part of three sides of her—north, south and west. She was then within all but striking distance of the rocks, and the seas, high and wicked, were sweeping over her. It looked like a bad place to work out of if we should get close in, but the skipper held on.

"Not much lee room, but plenty of water under her keel, anyway," and himself at the wheel, he sailed the "Johnnie Duncan" around the "Flamingo." He hailed his friend Maurice Blake as he went by, waved his hand to the others, and hove a line aboard. They took the line, hauled in the hawser at the end of it, made that fast to the windlass, and then we started off with the "Flamingo" in tow. We were doing pretty well—what with plenty of wind and the "Johnnie" buckling down to her work like she was a steamer

—until the hawser parted and back toward the rocks went the "Flamingo" again.

"No use," said the skipper; "sea's too much for any line we got. We'll try it with the seine-boat. Who'll go in the seine-boat and try to take them off? Think quick, but mind what it means."

Every man of the crew of the "Johnnie Duncan" said "Here!" The cook even came out of the fore-cabin and put in his "And me too, skipper."

"You're good men," said the skipper, "blasted good men!" and looked us up and down. We felt proud, he said it in such a way. "But you're taking your lives in your hands, and some of you got wives and children, mothers or something. Who hasn't anybody depending on him? Which of you hasn't any woman somewhere, or little brothers or sisters?"

About twelve of the sixteen men standing on the

"You'll know in a minute," said the skipper, and he leaped for the seine-boat, made it and grabbed the steering oar. "Stand by—push off! Fend off in the vessel there! Steve, if anything happens—you know—you're to take the 'Johnnie' home. Give way, fellows. Now—watch out!—now—now then, around with her—end on and there she is like a bird! And now drive her!"

"A bird," said the skipper—but a wild-looking bird. She seemed to be going fifty feet into the air one moment and down out of sight the next, and water slamming aboard her so that the rest of us left behind on the "Johnnie" thought she was swamped half a dozen times. Two had to leave their oars and go to bailing, while the skipper, with an arm and shoulders and back and swinging waist like—well, like nothing a man ever had before—kept her end to it.

"Good luck!" we called out.

"Never fear—we'll bring 'em back!" called back the skipper.

"Or stay with them," we thought.

But he didn't stay with them. It was a tickish job; but the skipper got away with it. He didn't dare to go too near the "Flamingo," for that meant that the seas would pitch the seine-boat up and dash it to kindling wood against her hull. What he did do was to go as near her as he could

and keep the seine-boat clear, then heave a line aboard and call to her crew one after the other to make it fast around themselves and then jump overboard. It took some nerve to make that jump. From the rigging of the "Duncan" we watched them. We saw them shiver and draw up—and these were men accustomed to danger, reckless men—but the shiver was over in a breath, and then it was over the rail and into the sea—a game fight—and then they were hauled into the seine-boat. Some of them, we thought, would never make it, for it was an awful sea.



Then It Was Over the Rail and Into the Sea

deck of the "Johnnie Duncan" said "Me!" to that.

"Three-quarters of you at least," said the skipper, "are liars. Over with the seine-boat now, and be careful nobody gets hurt!"

Somebody did get hurt though. Andie Howe got his foot mashed, and was helped below. The skipper gave the rest of us a scolding in advance. "You're not hurt yet, but some of you will be—like Andie—if you don't watch out. You'd think that some of you were up on some little pond in the country somewhere launching a canoe off one of those club-house floats. Keep your eye out for those seas when they board. And watch out for that foreboom or some of you'll have a head cut off. A man killed or a man washed over the rail—what's the difference—it's a man lost. Look out now! Watch out, you Steve—watch out! Over with it!"

And over it went, and into it leaped two men before it could sag away, while the rest of us stood by the rail watching our chance.

"Nelson," called the skipper, "come away from that rail! Steve, come away—come away, I say; and no back talk! Pat, you can go. Jump in—watch your chance, or it's the last of you. Eddie, you can go, and you Bill, and you Frenchy. Joe, stand away from that rail, or I'll put you in the hold and batten the hatches on you! Now, that's better. And that's enough—six men to the oars and one to steer."

"And who'll steer?" asked somebody.

As fast as one of the "Flamingo's" men made the seine-boat he was set to work bailing out or taking a pull at the oars, for it was a difficult matter in that sea to keep the seine-boat at the right distance from the ship. But they got them all—ten of them. Two were hauled in unconscious; but they came to after awhile.

To get aboard the "Johnnie" again was almost as bad as to get into the seine-boat from the "Flamingo." But we managed it. Long Steve was swept over while we were at it; but we got him back with the help of Maurice Blake and another of the "Flamingo's" crowd. By smart, clever work they grabbed Steve before he could go down, and hauled him back into the seine-boat.

When they were all safe aboard the "Duncan" the skipper shook hands with his friend Maurice. "I call that luck, Maurice—to come out to save a stranger, and find you've saved your own. And now whose trick at the wheel? You, Joe. Put her on the off-shore tack till we're well clear of that headland—maybe we can make it in one leg. No? Then a short tack, and have an eye out for the ledges—not